

NOTES AND NEWS.

DR. J. A. ALLEN finding that his health demanded relief from some of his numerous responsibilities, has been forced to resign the editorship of THE AUK, and the Council of the American Ornithologists' Union, at the recent meeting in Philadelphia, chose Mr. Witmer Stone as his successor. Simultaneous with Dr. Allen's retirement Mr. Frank M. Chapinan resigned as Associate Editor.

Beginning with the initial volume of the Bulletin of the Nuttall Ornithological Club, and continuing to the present year, Dr. Allen has, without intermission guided the course of this journal and its successor THE AUK; and the series of thirty-six volumes stands as a perpetual monument to his ability, and his painstaking devotion to the cause of ornithology and the interests of the American Ornithologists' Union. There have been few continuous editorships of equal length in the history of scientific periodicals.

Dr. Allen has kindly agreed to see the present number, already partly under way, through the press, but hereafter all articles and communications intended for publication and all books and publications for notice should be sent to Mr. Witmer Stone, Academy of Natural Sciences, Logan Square, Philadelphia, Pa.

THE rapid decrease in the number of bird collectors is a matter that has attracted the serious attention of ornithologists in the past few years. It is certainly true that there are to-day, very few young men engaged in forming a collection of bird-skins, formerly regarded as a *sine qua non* to the development of an ornithologist. So serious has this matter appeared to some, that it has been suggested that the A. O. U. Committee on the Protection of North American Birds might well be changed to a Committee for prevention of the extermination of North American ornithologists. The abandonment of collecting is charged to the stringency of the State laws, some of which make the acquirement of a collecting permit impossible, while others impose such limitations as to make it useless for scientific purposes. The Audubon Societies have been blamed for this condition of affairs, but we believe wrongly. In practically all of the bills endorsed by the Audubon Societies proper provision is made for scientific collecting, but the legislative committees and State game commissions, without adequate knowledge of the needs of ornithology, have frequently altered the bills, or so administered the laws, as to make the procuring of a permit difficult or impossible.

On the other hand it often happens that among those who have secured permits in the past there are some who have displayed little or no sympathy with citizens who prefer live birds to dead ones, and armed with their permits they have carried on collecting close to houses and grounds in a manner which has made them very obnoxious. These men are naturally

regarded as examples of 'scientific ornithologists' and it is no wonder that they arouse opposition to the granting of any collecting license.

We believe that legitimate collecting is indispensable to ornithological research, and that such collecting in the past has had a negligible influence upon the abundance of our birds. Therefore it seems that the A. O. U. Protection Committee would confer a great benefit upon ornithology if it undertakes, as suggested at the recent meeting of the Union, to place the needs of ornithological collecting in its true light before the State game commissions and similar bodies; and also to bring all collectors to a full realization of the responsibility which rests upon them of prosecuting their collecting in a manner that will not prove obnoxious to their fellow citizens, and arouse antagonism against ornithologists at large.

There is still another side to this discussion. Perhaps, after all, the stringency of the laws is not the only, or even the main reason, for the decrease in the number of collectors. Many of the younger zoölogists in the eastern United States started in their scientific work as ornithologists and as collectors of skins, but later abandoned birds for some other group of animals; not because of difficulty in collecting birds but because they found better opportunities in other fields for original discoveries in local systematic work. There is a limit to the number of species and subspecies worth describing in any area, and so far as the study of the birds of eastern North America is concerned, that limit has practically been reached.

But systematic ornithology is after all only a branch of systematic zoölogy, and Ornithology in its truer and broader sense, has to do with Anatomy, Animal Behavior, Development and Meaning of Coloration, and other broad problems of evolution, just as much as with systematic work. In many of these fields birds furnish exceptional opportunities for the investigator, and moreover the collecting of skins in connection with such work is by no means a necessity, while the investigator is just as much an ornithologist as is he who concerns himself wholly with the study of specific and subspecific differences.

So, even while we maintain that collecting birds is still a necessary part of ornithological science in many parts of the world, and will always be so in anatomical and certain other lines of investigation, nevertheless wherever the systematic side of ornithology becomes practically a completed study, we must naturally expect to find a decrease in collectors, and this without danger of ornithologists becoming extinct.

As in previous years, the Museum of Vertebrate Zoölogy of the University of California was active during the past spring and summer in carrying on zoölogical field work. This year the work was conducted entirely within the State of California, in accordance with the principle that a knowledge of the native fauna is of first importance to a State institution of this kind.

The three months from March to May, inclusive, were occupied in exploration of the San Joaquin Valley along its entire length, the particular

purpose being to ascertain the status of the rodent population of the region. Incidentally specimens of certain desirable birds were secured, and much information relative to local bird distribution was obtained. This work was prosecuted by Mr. Swarth and Mr. Grinnell, with two assistants.

Miss Annie M. Alexander and Miss Louise Kellogg with two assistants spent the three summer months in the high mountain region of Siskiyou and Trinity Counties, collecting birds and mammals, in continuance of work begun by them during the previous winter. The series of specimens gathered includes several species new to the Museum, one bird being new to the known fauna of the State, while much information bearing upon the relationships of the Shasta and coast faunas was obtained.

The period from June 15 to September 15 was occupied in exploration of the mountainous region lying between Tehachapi Pass and Mount Whitney. Mr. Grinnell, Mr. Taylor, and three assistants were engaged in this work, the results comprising, aside from large series of specimens of mammals, birds, and reptiles, an increased knowledge of the complex faunal conditions at the southern end of the Sierra Nevada.

All of the above field work was made possible through special gifts by Miss Alexander of funds for its support.

MR. SAMUEL N. RHOADS returned from Ecuador early in August after a very successful trip of about six months. He collected at various points along the railroad which runs from Guayaquil to Quito, especially at Bucay (975 ft.), on the Chanchan River (2000 ft.), Huigra (4000 ft.), Mt. Pichincha (8000 ft.), Riobamba (10,000 ft.), and in the vicinity of Quito. He brought back about 1600 birds, some mammals and reptiles, and a number of invertebrates. His collection is now at the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

MR. ROY C. ANDREWS, Assistant Curator of Mammalogy in the American Museum of Natural History, sailed for Korea, December 13. He expects to spend about two months at the whaling stations there, for the purpose of studying and securing specimens of the California Gray Whale, and Humpbacked Whale. He then plans a trip into the mountains of northern Korea, known as Chokaku San, where about four months will be spent in collecting mammals and birds, if possible in regions not hitherto visited by zoölogists.

MR. ALEX. WETMORE will represent the Biological Survey, U. S. Department of Agriculture, in Porto Rico this winter, coöperating with the Insular Board of Agriculture in studying the economic relations of the birds and mammals of the island.

MR. E. A. GOLDMAN of the Biological Survey will return to Panama about January 1, 1912, to resume his investigations of the birds and mammals of the region.

PART V of Ridgway's 'Birds of North and Middle America' appeared on November 29. Part VI we learn is well under way and partly in type. The whole will now probably run into nine volumes instead of eight as originally estimated.

DR. EDGAR A. MEARNS sailed on October 28 for London to join Mr. Childs Frick on an expedition to Abyssinia and Lake Rudolf. The members of the expedition will include, besides Dr. Mearns, Mr. Childs Frick, son of Mr. Henry C. Frick of Pittsburgh; Mr. Blick, a friend of Mr. C. Frick, and a physician. The country it is planned to explore will be primarily Abyssinia, but the trip will be extended into British East Africa, and include the region about Lake Rudolf. It is intended to make as complete a collection as possible of the mammals and birds of the regions visited, Dr. Mearns giving his attention to the birds and small mammals, which will go to the National Museum. The country it is proposed to traverse will be mainly outside of that visited by the Roosevelt expedition, thus enabling Dr. Mearns to become personally familiar with areas having an important relation to the faunas he has already studied in other parts of Africa. The new material thus obtained will supplement in an important way that already acquired from the African region by the National Museum, and be of great importance in working out the collections gathered by the Roosevelt expedition. As both Messrs. Frick and Blick, as well as Dr. Mearns, have had previous experience in African wilds, important results may be expected from their present extended expedition.

WITHERBY AND COMPANY, London, announce the early publication of 'A History of the Birds of Colorado' by William Lutley Selater, lately director of the Colorado College Museum. The volume is to consist of 500 pages and 16 full-page plates from photographs, and the edition will be limited to 550 copies. Subscription price for the United States, \$5.

The prospectus states that the avifauna of the State has never been hitherto adequately dealt with, and in the present volume an attempt has been made to give (1) Short descriptions and keys of all the birds, some 392 in number, hitherto recorded from the State. (2) An account of the distribution of each bird without and within the State. (3) A short notice of its habits, and (4) A list of references to its occurrence in the bird literature of Colorado.

American ornithologists will look forward with much interest to the appearance of Mr. Selater's volume.

BIRD-LORE for December closes the thirteenth volume of this magazine, which contains almost twice as many pages as Volume I. This increase in size is, in part, due to the natural growth of the magazine, and in part to the publication in it of the Annual Report of the National Association of Audubon Societies, which occupies about one half of the present issue.

This report includes an outline of the work of the Secretary for the past year, under the heads of 'Legislation,' 'Field Agents and other Workers,' 'State Societies,' 'Bird Colonies,' 'Wardens,' 'Egret Protection,' the 'Mrs. Russel Sage Fund,' 'Miscellaneous,' and 'Financial.' The report of the Secretary, Mr. T. G. Pearson, is followed by reports from field agents in New England, on the Pacific coast, in Texas, in Virginia, and from various bird colonies. Added to this are reports from the thirty-eight State societies which form, as it were, State agencies for the National Association, and which can deal with local issues far more effectively than could a national organization not familiar with local conditions.

The report of the Treasurer, Dr. J. Dwight, Jr., shows that the income of the Society for the year ending October 20, 1911, was \$36,599.72, of which no less than \$10,000 was made up of special contributions, and it is hoped that as the increasingly important work of the Association, with its State allies, becomes more widely known, it will receive even greater financial support from the public. The report in question is one of the best arguments which the Association could put forth as an appeal for funds with which to carry on its work, the limits of which are governed only by its means. The past history of the whole movement for bird protection has been one constant struggle to secure, retain, and enforce proper legislative measures designed to protect birds. Up to the present time the efforts of the Audubon Societies have of necessity been so largely directed toward this end that they could not devote due attention to the educational aspects of their work. In the future, however, let us hope that public sentiment has become so thoroughly aroused that there will be less danger of the repeal of the excellent laws which, generally speaking, prevail throughout the Union, and that in consequence the National Association may devote a greater part of its time and income to the diffusion of knowledge of the economic and æsthetic value of birds.